

**Abstract**

The invention relates to a process for the selective, economically viable preparation of methacrylic acid and 5 methacrylic esters starting from acetone cyanohydrin, wherein, in a first step, 2-hydroxy-2-methylpropionic acid is prepared by reacting acetone cyanohydrin with sulphuric acid in the presence of water and a suitable polar solvent and is isolated and methacrylic acid is 10 subsequently prepared by  $\beta$ -elimination of water starting from 2-hydroxy-2-methylpropionic acid.